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THE ANDEAN INITIATIVE: A FAULTY
CAMPAIGN IN THE WAR ON DRUGS

by

Noel B. Bergeron
Major, U.S. Army

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College
in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the Joint
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The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views
and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College
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ABSTRACT

This paper is an analysis of the five year "Andean Initiative", of the 1989 Presidential Anti-Drug program, which provides increased law enforcement, military and economic assistance to Bolivia, Columbia, and Peru in an attempt to eradicate cocaine within these source countries. The program has a heavy military assistance emphasis aimed at increasing capability and will of the host nations to combat the drug trade. The paper discusses the shortcomings and potential detrimental effects of the program's lopsided military emphasis. It includes an overview of the military's role, specific program elements and drug trade problems in the source nations. It also examines past program ineffectiveness, possible consequences and implications of similar future programs; and includes criticism of the lack of simultaneous programs to address associated political, economic and social problems. The basic conclusions are that the current strategy is still insufficient to achieve the desired goals and is seriously flawed due to disproportionate emphasis on military programs, without regard to other critical and equally important aspects. Although detailed recommendations are not specified, the conclusion does provide some recent and innovative suggestions and ideas for a more balanced and potentially more successful Andean strategy.

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I. INTRODUCTION.

In the current fight in the "war on drugs" the United States Government has developed and implemented a three pronged strategy of interdiction, eradication and demand reduction, in its efforts to battle the growing drug problem in the United States, which has been declared, "a national security concern because of its ability to destabilize democratic institutions."¹ In September 1989, President Bush outlined his new anti-drug program which included both domestic and international elements. Although this new strategy did not significantly change past U.S. policies and goals, it did increase the emphasis on the use of military equipment and advisors (but not direct involvement) in areas outside of the United States. One major component of this new strategy is the "Andean Initiative", which calls for an increase in law enforcement, military, and economic assistance to Bolivia, Columbia and Peru, in an attempt to dismantle drug organizations, isolate major coca growing regions, destroy production facilities and block precursor/essential chemical deliveries.²

This Andean initiative is focused on increased support to these host nations primarily through the State Department's existing security assistance, military aid and economic aid programs. Although the underlying reasons for this strategy are sound, and the efforts are targeted at the right places, I believe that the military assistance/aid aspects of the program are being overemphasized and that the potential long term

results of some of these initiatives may be more detrimental than helpful, in assisting these foreign governments in the resolution of their problems and achievement of long term U.S. goals.

In presenting this discussion, I will first briefly review the evolution of the military emphasis and involvement in this aspect of the national drug war and examine the major elements of the actual Andean plan to include its goals, planned resources and methods for implementation. I will then summarize the major reasons behind the Andean emphasis and present a brief overview of the extent and implications of the drug trade in the three source countries involved. Following, this introductory information, I will examine and discuss the lack of effectiveness and some of the undesired consequences of similar past U.S. sponsored programs in these countries and consider some of the possible adverse consequences of continued emphasis on increased military and police capability and direct U.S. involvement, without a balanced and comprehensive plan to simultaneously address other critical aspects of each countries' drug related problems. Finally, I will address my conclusions and discuss some new ideas and considerations for a more balanced and potentially more successful Andean campaign strategy.

II. The Military: New Emphasis and Expanded Role.

To better understand how and why the current Andean eradication strategy has a predominantly military emphasis, it is beneficial to briefly review the historical development of the U.S. military's current involvement. Although restricted use of military forces for in-country law enforcement is an age old American tradition backed by the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, recent changes and new legal interpretations now allow for U.S. military assistance, in an indirect role, to law enforcement agencies outside the United States under emergency conditions (1981 amendment to Title 10, U.S.Code). These conditions must be specified in declarations by the U.S. Secretary of Defense and Attorney General; requirements which were met in July and June of 1986 respectively, when each signed separate letters declaring that the international drug situation was in fact an emergency situation and a threat to U.S. interests. These specific declarations were in direct response to President Reagan's April 1986 National Security Decision Directive (NSDD), which increased the emphasis for expansion of the military's role in counternarcotics operations and clarified the conditions necessary for involvement. These conditions included the requirements for invitation by the appropriate host government, operations to be directed by U.S. agencies and involvement in a support function only.³

Title IX of the FY 1989 National Defense Authorization Act further expanded formal Department of Defense (DOD)

responsibilities, which included the increased role of U.S. military forces in the State Department's security assistance programs and in other U.S. agencies' overseas counternarcotics operations. In September of 1989, the President and Secretary of Defense issued the National Drug Control Strategy and DOD guidance, respectively, which further emphasized a multinational and multiagency approach to the simultaneous reduction of the supply of and demand for illegal drugs. The DOD guidance further stipulated that, "an effective attack on the flow of illegal drugs, depends upon actions at every phase of the flow, including action in countries that are the source of drugs...through assistance for nation building and operational support to and cooperation with host country forces, to prevent drug exports."⁴ The near term efforts of this program are aimed at the major U.S. cocaine source countries, the Andean nations of Bolivia, Columbia and Peru.

III. The New Plan: Objectives, Goals and Resources.

The focus on the three major Andean countries is not new. The United States has supported and conducted anti-narcotics activities in this region for the past ten years. However, the emergence of a specific formal Andean campaign is relatively new. The overall objective of this formal five year program is to work with these host governments to disrupt and destroy the growing, processing, and transportation of coca and coca products to effect major reduction in U.S. cocaine supplies.

The three major short term goals of this effort are outlined below.

The first is to strengthen each host nation's political will and institutional capability, to enable them to take the needed steps to disrupt activities and eventually dismantle drug trafficking organizations, through extended security training and military assistance. The program also calls for expanded economic assistance starting in FY 1991, however, this assistance is conditional, based on each nation's drug control performance and the existence of sound in-country economic programs to help offset associated economic dislocation.

The second stated goal is to increase the effectiveness of law enforcement and military activities of each country against the cocaine industry. These program elements include measures to isolate growing areas by controlling road, air and water access routes, and developing national air space control and rapid response capabilities against drug trafficking threats.

The final near-term goal is to inflict significant damage/destruction to drug organizations, which operate in these countries, by working with them to target, disrupt/dismantle and destroy operations and elements of the most value. These program elements include identification and incapacitation of key leaders, (arrests, prosecutions, extraditions, etc.), halting drug related fund transfers, seizure of assets and development/establishment of intelligence

systems.⁵

A careful examination of the methods for achieving these goals reveals that most involve improvements or increases in the respective governments' capabilities to gain and/or maintain effective control and security within their countries.

The Andean Initiative is a predominantly military/security assistance program with an estimated cost of over \$2.5 billion, designed to increase host nation capability and involvement in drug eradication programs, while hopefully limiting the U.S. military role to logistical support, equipment issues/loans and training. Although, not preferred, the use of direct military involvement has not been completely ruled out. Although this initiative has not really increased the scope of past U.S. military involvement, it has significantly increased the resources and personnel involved. In its first year, the number of advisers in Columbia increased (to 50-100 (depending on sources)), and seven Special Forces teams were deployed (Peru - 3; Bolivia - 2; Columbia - 2). The associated FY 90 military assistance programs for these countries was \$260 million (\$90.8 - Columbia; \$97.6 - Bolivia; \$73.3 - Peru). These allocations were in addition to a separate \$65 million Colombian emergency military equipment and training program previously approved and in effect.⁶

IV. The Source Nations: Different Problems and Concerns.

To better understand the extent of the U.S. drug problem and logic behind the cocaine and Andean emphasis, it is helpful to examine some of the statistics which underscore the severity of the problem. Currently, over twenty-five million Americans buy or use illicit drugs, which contributes to a diverse criminal enterprise which grosses in excess of \$50 billion per year.⁷ During the past decade, the major increase in U.S. drug abuse has been primarily in cocaine. During the period 1977-1987, the imports of cocaine increased between five and tenfold, while those for marijuana and heroin remained relatively stable.⁸ An estimated six million Americans use cocaine regularly. 1986 dollar sales for cocaine exceeded \$6.5 billion and an estimated one third of all prison inmates in 1987, were convicted on drug related crimes. Finally, it is believed that virtually all cocaine imported into the United States comes from the tri-country Andean regions.⁹ These staggering facts support the decision to concentrate efforts in this particular area.

The cocaine industry dominates the economies of Bolivia, Columbia and Peru and directly threatens the survival of each nations' current political and economic systems. To fully appreciate the magnitude of the problems faced by each country, and the complications associated with counter drug efforts, it is necessary to highlight each country's situation.

Bolivia is the main Andean cultivation and processing

center, and is the world's second largest coca producing nation, with an estimated 300,000 - 400,000 individuals engaged in growing, processing or transporting coca and its derivatives.¹⁰ Although it is publicly committed to combating the drug trade within its borders, the government's efforts have been hampered by a 24,000% inflation (over the last four years), a popular ban on the use of herbicides within its borders, a tenfold increase in domestic cocaine addictions, cocaine driven distorted labor costs (\$3/day legitimate wage vs. \$30/day cocaine wage), and a growing anti-American sentiment among its population.¹¹ Additionally, Bolivia has a well organized network of legal coca farmer labor unions which have significant political influence with the government and little incentive to cease coca farming, (dollar yields per coca hectare, \$2,600 per year) are over four times greater than that of the next most profitable products, oranges and avocados.¹²

Columbia is the major Andean distribution center and "home to the worlds' largest, richest and most lucrative criminal enterprise."¹³ The country has been plagued with bribery and corruption in government, numerous assassinations of government officials, and terrorist bombings and other threats to the government, as direct result of its past drug crackdown and drug lord extradition efforts. Columbia also has a severe narco-guerrilla crisis with insurgent groups such as M-19 and FARC that support various drug cartels to further the advancement of their specific causes¹⁴, and a similar problem with conservative right wing social groups, that support

traffickers to maintain political influence in the government.¹⁵

Peru is the most serious casualty of the narcotics industry. It is the worlds largest producer of coca, its largest single export and drugs are deeply entrenched in almost every aspect of the country's economy. More than 100,000 Peruvian families grow coca. In the country's Upper Huallaga Valley region (which generates approximately 60% of U.S. cocaine), the income per acre of coca is ten times that of coffee and twenty one times that of rice.¹⁶ Peru's situation is even more complicated due to the strong and influential Maoist guerrilla movement, Shining Path (Sendaro Luminoso). This group currently dominates the Upper Huallaga region, controls organized coca growing cooperatives and provides protection for and collects taxes from local peasant farmers. The continued existence of the country's present government is in serious jeopardy.¹⁷ Although the above country descriptions are not all inclusive, they do highlight the severity of their problems and will help in understanding how and why the current U.S. lopsided emphasis on military aid and assistance program is potentially dangerous and will probably not achieve the U.S.'s source country eradication program objectives.

V. THE MILITARY EMPHASIS: MORE HARMFUL THAN HELPFUL?

The use of U.S. military forces in Andean region counter-drug operations is not new. In July 1986, six U.S. helicopters were used for air transportation in a Drug

Enforcement Administration (DEA) directed operation, (Operation Blast Furnace).¹⁸ U.S. Special Forces teams have also been supporting the DEA's, "Operation Snowcap," in Peru's Upper Huallaga Valley since 1988; an operation which has recently been expanded to include counterinsurgency training for military forces opposed to the Shining Path insurgency movement.¹⁹ What is significant however, is the dramatic U.S. expansion of these types of activities as a direct result of the formal Andean campaign. Newly proposed programs include expanded training for six Peruvian battalions and provisions for military equipment to include river patrol boats and the overhaul of twenty A-37 ground attack aircraft. Similar programs in Bolivia include the funding for establishment of forward training bases, increases in aircraft and patrol boats for operations in the Chapare area (Bolivia's major coca growing region), and expansion of the Bolivian army's role in counternarcotics operations.²⁰ Although these type programs are designed to assist the host nation's with their internal counter-drug programs, there is much evidence to suggest that to date, they have been relatively ineffective, will do little to correct the root causes of the drug production problems in each country, and may actually help to weaken the very governments they are designed to assist.

One major problem in evaluating program successes or failures is the insufficiency of the methods used. There are few meaningful or widely accepted qualitative indicators to measure the actual progress or effectiveness of these specific

programs. This often results in random uncoordinated actions (fighting the battles) without a clear cut idea of how they will contribute to the overall objective. Most of the past and current drug war measures of effectiveness are quantitative in nature and concern numbers of successful incidents or quantity of material seized. These measures have frequently included such variables as metric tons of drugs seized, or chemicals interdicted/destroyed, number of labs/airfields destroyed, number of hectares of land with substituted crops, amounts of asset/dollars seized or frozen, number of extraditions or successful cartel member convictions, etc. The problem with these types of "body count" or attrition approaches is that they are often meaningless due to the lack of a realistic base to compare them against, or they are evaluated in a vacuum without consideration of other significant factors such as simultaneous increases, relocated/modified operations, or actual effect on supply.

For example, despite the supposedly successful cumulative effects of almost ten years of various combinations of eradication and substitution programs to date, only 12,500 of Bolivia's estimated 70,000 - 100,000 and less than 2000 of Peru's 270,000-300,000 hectares of coca producing land have been eradicated. Additionally, there are reports that some farmers in Bolivia's Chapare region have used their substitution cash incentive payments to help offset the costs of planting new fields.⁴¹ The above statistics are even more depressing when evaluated against the 1989 simultaneous coca

cultivation post-eradication increase figures for the Andean region; Peru 19,000 hectare increase, Bolivia 2500 hectare increase, and Columbia a 15,000 hectare increase.²²

Although these types of measurements are not really helpful in determining success, they do seem to point out that present U.S. micro-solutions and punitive carrot and stick approaches, to reduce supply, are probably failing and in many instances even counter-productive.²³ In recognition of this problem, one drug war expert, Mr. Kenneth Sharp offers two logical questions to help define the goals of U.S. counternarcotics efforts. First, does the action help stem the flow of narcotics into the U.S. and, second, what are the consequences to U.S. and Latin interests.²⁴ It is with these two questions in mind that I will discuss the potential counter productive aspects of past efforts and the potential dangers of the continued lopsided U.S. military emphasis.

First is the conflict in national goals. The drug war is simply not a top political priority for the Andean countries involved. Military oriented counternarcotics operations are often in direct conflict with higher priority problems of economic stability, unemployment and subversion. The successful use of local and foreign military forces often worsens problems in these areas, especially when operations are perceived to be created and controlled by U.S. authorities.

In many instances, we have failed to accompany our military efforts with legitimate alternatives for the populations affected, by denying or withholding simultaneous

economic aid to allow for necessary crop substitution and debt relief programs to decrease the need or desire to grow illicit crops. Since 1983 the Congress has continued to link qualifications for foreign aid to perceived successful narcotics control performance. (As previously mentioned, this is also still a requirement in the current Andean aid programs outlined above). However, it is not really possible to have significant success in the first without the latter. This is one of the major reason for ex-Peruvian President Garcia-Perez's and Bolivian President Paz's opposition to the initiatives originally proposed in U.S. military assistance plans.²⁵ Still another problem with the economic aid issue is the lack of sufficient quantity necessary for effective change. In the past, the U.S. has been providing (for those countries which "qualify") one time incentive payments (\$2000) for each hectare of coca voluntarily eradicated. However, given the long term coca production income benefits, there are no reasons or motivations to accept such an offer. The Bolivian and Peruvian governments have conservatively estimated a half billion and 1.75 billion dollar (respectively) requirement for effective crop substitution programs.

A second and more serious conflict in goals concerns issues of legitimacy and each host nation government's continued ability to govern and survive. There is evidence to suggest that the extensive use of military forces has resulted in alienation of the present populations (due to loss of income and human rights violations etc.), and has contributed to the

legitimacy of insurgent groups such as the Shining Path and FARC. The peasant alienation which has resulted from improper military and police actions has provided fuel to the insurgent causes and has contributed to increased incidents of civil unrest, such as the May 1987 farmer's attack on a DEA base camp and the government building occupation and hostage taking incident by Peruvian farmers in January 1988, aimed at stopping government eradication efforts. Past military efforts have also contributed to the strengthening of formal political organizations and lobbies, such as those in Bolivia, which successfully diverted political support of Bolivia's largest national workers union over to the far left political parties, which are both anti-government and anti-U.S.²⁶ The unpopularity of U.S. involvement in Operation Blast Furnace in 1986 also resulted in a political crisis for the government in Bolivia which severely hampered other counternarcotic programs and weakened support for the government.²⁷

As in any conflict, support of the people is essential. The Andean national governments cannot effectively combat the drug trade within their respective countries without some type of support from their people. The continuation of military efforts that raise sensitive issues concerning national sovereignty or perceptions of weak government will only continue to weaken each government's ability to effectively resolve its drug related problems.

Another major argument against expanded military efforts, is the question of effectiveness of isolated military raid operations. This argument is supported by evidence that narcotics trafficker counterstrategies have been successful in negating the effectiveness of such force. For example, a post-Operation Blast Furnace analysis indicated that it had little lasting effect. Although Bolivian production was temporarily disrupted it quickly returned to normal following the withdrawal of forces. Similarly, short term success in Columbia's 1984 coca processing raids resulted in a southward migration of activities and similar crack down efforts in Peru and Bolivia resulted in increased drug activities in Brazil and Argentina.²⁵ A more recent example of this relocation phenomenon was the May 1990 raid on the major transshipment center, LaPetrola, in Columbia. Despite supposedly significant arrests, numerous airstrip and aircraft destructions and the seizure of \$860 million in narcotics, local drug runners just moved to alternate centers and continued business as usual.⁴⁹

Other direct consequences of military counternarcotics activities have been significant increases in terrorism from both insurgent and right wing vigilante groups, to either terrorize peasants to gain support or in the later case, to persuade government officials to stop pursuing extradition or other unpopular counternarcotics efforts. Widespread corruption of police and high ranking military officials has also reduced the effectiveness of training efforts and raid operations.

Another major criticism of the heavy military aid approach is its potential affect on the region's military balance of power and possible worsening of the drug cartel problem, by losing a government to another military dictatorship which remains entrenched in narcotics trafficking. The disastrous results of U.S. military aid to General Noriega and the Panamanian Defense Forces and the military control of the Uruguayan government from 1971-1985 are recent examples of the potential for such a situation to develop. The history of these Latin American countries is replete with incidents of military coups and dictatorships. Bolivia alone has witnessed over 180 coups since 1825. It is doubtful that the fragile democracies in these countries, plagued with social and economic problems, will gain much long term benefit from increases to corrupt military forces with questionable loyalty to the governments they serve.

Associated with this issue of corrupt military and weak democratic governments is the issue of the legality (under U.S. laws) of supporting governments guilty of excessive human right violations. This problem in Peru was formally addressed in a State Department report earlier last year, which claimed that there is little civilian oversight of military activities in emergency zones and that constitutional rights of citizens are often ignored by military officials. Additionally, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the State Department have also indicated that Peruvian military and police forces are guilty of torture, murder and other significant human rights

violations.³⁰

Still another argument against the continued emphasis on use of local military forces to conduct police actions within their respective countries, is the perceived double standard of our policy. We continue to pressure Latin American countries to use their militaries to combat drug cartels while our own laws forbid the same direct involvement within our own country.³¹

One final problem which has resulted from our military emphasis in the war on drugs is the increasing addiction of host country governments to our technological solutions. Helicopter support has become indispensable for Peruvian counter drug operations and ground based missions are not conducted without dedicated air support. This over-reliance on technology may adversely affect future operations and training and result in an indefinite need for continued military assistance.³²

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the apparent limited and questionable success of past efforts and the predominant military/security focus of the ongoing Andean Initiative programs, I believe that the U.S. still lacks any real comprehensive or integrated strategy for its Andean campaign, and that we continue to place a disproportionate and potentially dangerous emphasis on military solutions. The U.S. must develop a more balanced comprehensive and integrated macro-oriented campaign, with clearly defined

objectives and programs aimed at correcting both the systemic and technical deficiencies of the interdependent political, social, economic and military variables in each country involved.³³

Although there is a legitimate role for military aspects of any effective strategy for combating drugs, as in any war or campaign, these type of actions should not be conducted independently or without considering the possible adverse effects they may have on overall strategic objectives or long range goals. It is arguable whether the war on drugs is actually a war at all, it never the less, does have many similar characteristics to those situations short of war, now defined as Low Intensity Conflict. The delicate and complex situation in the Andean target countries has numerous similarities to many third world insurgences, and therefore requires a carefully planned, comprehensive, and well balanced strategy similar to any previously effective counterinsurgency program.

Any effective campaign must also include political and economic commitment that is perceived as sincere by the respective host nation governments and of sufficient quantity to support the long term changes which are necessary. These social and economic activities must be coordinated and carried out simultaneously, with various military assistance enforcement programs, instead of being disregarded or contingent upon some arbitrary measure of demonstrated commitment or success. While security assistance and military

aid programs are appropriate and necessary for establishing or enhancing the security, intelligence and psychological operations necessary to achieve ultimate success, they will do little to generate critical host nation population support and incentive for cooperation in specific programs, or contribute to the institutional changes necessary for the needed economic and social development.³⁴ In other words, increasing the technical capabilities of a country (one objective of the Andean initiative) will not guarantee any increase in national will to combat drugs (another second equally important stated objective). Additionally, as I have previously discussed, unilateral or disproportionate military activities may actually adversely affect host nation cooperation by contributing to loss of government legitimacy and effectiveness. This is clearly not a desired consequence of any U.S. strategy! Any successful future programs must focus on legitimacy and government stability issues and evaluate the potential impact of military operations and de-emphasize extensive or long term U.S. involvement. Strong nationalist feelings, perceptions of imperial puppet governments and issues of state sovereignty are critical factors which cannot continue to be ignored.³⁵ It is these very real issues, concerns and lessons of the past, that have caused Peru's new president, Alberto Fujimori, to refuse any U.S. military involvement beyond equipment and training, even at the expense of \$35 million in U.S. military aid.³⁶

Although actual details of a specific strategy are beyond the scope of this paper, a more balanced, integrated and

multi-lateral approach is needed and should include more simultaneous incentive/assistance programs. These might include programs such as the partially successful United Nations efforts at improved schools and public facilities,³⁷ more meaningful substitution incentives and new ideas such as recently proposed special trade benefits or debt remissions for countries participating in eradication and substitution programs.³⁵ Without such simultaneous will enhancement programs, the Andean host nations' and U.S.'s goals and objectives, will remain dissimilar.

Another important aspect of any successful campaign is the identification of specific objectives for each host nation. If the goal is to enhance host nation will and cooperation, then a more careful analysis of each nation's needs may be required so specific incentive and training programs can be tailored to each countries' unique situation. A standard "cookie cutter" approach to all of these countries may not take into account critical differences in each country.

Another concept which is key to any program is the careful examination and identification of each countries' "center of gravity". Is it a cartel organization, the actual crops, or the local peasant farmers? A more careful and meaningful assessment of each countries problems, strength and weakness will facilitate more effective and comprehensive solutions which contribute to the overall U.S. objectives.

One final important aspect of any successful campaign is the understanding that it will require long term commitment.

Any successful counterinsurgency operations of the past have not been quick; neither will any truly successful Andean drug eradication campaign.

There has been some recent progress toward a more integrated and comprehensive multinational plan with the recent February 1990 Andean Summit and the subsequent resultant, Declaration of Cartagena. This was a joint U.S. Andean (Bolivia, Columbia, Peru) conference which was attended by all four presidents, to identify issues and recommendations for the long term resolution of both supply and demand related drug problems.³⁹ Additionally, new and more meaningful concepts for measures of effectiveness/success are being expanded and developed. These include not only the traditional concepts of strengthened political will and enhanced police/military and involvement, but also emphasize control of access routes, improved judicial procedures, sharing of seized assets, extradition agreements, and new formal employment/crop alternative programs.⁴⁰ While these measure may also appear to be nebulous and non-conclusive, they are never the less, aimed at affecting the infrastructure and institutional changes necessary, to create the conditions within each country to more effectively combat all aspects of their national drug problems.

In closing, there is an important paradox in combating any long term counterinsurgency campaign that should also be considered in any Andean campaign of the war on drugs. Just as failure to weigh the short term benefits/successes against long term costs/efforts may cause ultimate failure, it is also

important to remember that in the development and applications of any comprehensive long term strategy, the short term immediate situation cannot be ignored. A realistic fear expressed in a recent U.S. report on Andean efforts, cautions against the real danger of possibly losing to the quicker more immediate destructive effects of the drug industry, before any long term programs have a chance to succeed.⁴¹

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